

41 Eulogy

Good morning. Today I stand before you as the oldest grandson of the man I simply knew as “Gampy.”

George Herbert Walker Bush was the most gracious, most decent, and most humble man I will ever know.

You should know that my grandfather was thankful for his family.

When he began running for president in 1988, my grandfather released a campaign book outlining his views for the future. The book opened with “A Letter to a Grandson.” It was addressed to me and recounted our most recent summer together in Maine.

“P,” the letter read, “I’ve been thinking about it a lot – the most fun was the big rock boat, climbing out on it, watching you and Noelle playing on it. Near the end of summer, when the moon was full and the tides were higher, there was that special day at high tide when it almost seemed like the boat was real.”

In those few words my grandfather said more about his life than I could ever say today. Here was a man gearing up for the role of

a lifetime – and yet his mind went back to his family. This was a book about policy issues – and yet he still found time to write about an imaginary boat he built with his grandson.

Just as in his public career, the man had no quit in him. He would wake up around 5am to review security briefings and grab his first coffee of the day. When the coast was clear, all of the grandkids would do our best to snag a spot on his bed with Ganny while they read the paper.

We all grew up in awe of my grandfather – a larger than life figure fly-fishing off the rocks in Maine while talking up where the blue fish were running. He would be the first to host intense horseshoe matchups between family and secret service or any willing head of state, while encouraging trash talk like “power outage” if you were short, or “Woodrow Wilson” if you were long on your throw. His typical spread included BBQ, tacos, or pork rinds with hot sauce – of course with a healthy dose of blue bell ice cream. Always the competitor, each night closed with Gampy challenging us to the coveted “first asleep” award.

In classic Gampy fashion, he would write letters of encouragement – whether one of us had a hard semester at

school, one of us **(not me)** drove his boat Fidelity into the rocks, or one of us **(definitely not me)** ended up in Ganny's cross-hairs.

At the close of one summer, after he had left public service, Gampy wrote an email to all of us: "The only thing wrong with the last five months is that none of you were here enough. Next year, promise this old gampster that you will spend more time with us here by the sea. As you know I have had to give up fly fishing off the rocks, but there is plenty left to do – plenty of wonderful things. I think of all of you an awful lot. I just wonder how each of you is doing – in life, in college, in school. If you need me, I am here for you, because I love you very much."

In the Psalms, God makes this promise: "With long life, I will satisfy him and show him my salvation." Today, we know that Gampy did enjoy a long life; and we know he is enjoying the beginning of his next life with my Ganny and his beloved Robin.

You should also know my grandfather was thankful for his country.

My grandfather was grateful to lead a country where people can go as far and as fast as their dreams can take them; a country

that celebrates individuals alone or working together to improve the condition of their fellow man on a voluntary basis – an initiative he would later describe as a thousand points of light.

He often spoke about the timeless creed of “duty, honor, country” that has sustained the republic for over 240 years.

But this wasn’t something he just talked about ... it was something that he lived. He flew 58 combat missions in the Pacific, was shot down, and rescued at sea. Yet he never saw his own heroism as being any greater than anyone else’s. I know this because I experienced it personally. Gampy was so proud when my cousin Walker joined the Marines and I joined the Navy, and he was even prouder when we served overseas. In no way did our service compare to his; yet, we could never convince him of that.

In our times together, our big, wonderful and competitive family saw his personal goodness that lead to his historical greatness. He left a simple yet profound legacy to his children and grandchildren and to our great country – service to others. When the last word on George H.W. Bush is written, it will almost

certainly be this: the fulfillment of a complete life cannot be achieved without service to others.

Finally, my grandfather was thankful for his God.

Gampy once said: “God is good, but His love has a cost: We must be good to one another.” It was his faith and his love for others that drove him, that fulfilled him, and that led him to a calling in public life.

Toward the end of his service as President, at a Prayer Breakfast here in Houston, he reflected on his time aboard the submarine Finback after being shot down during WWII – he went up topside one night on the deck, stood watch, and looked out at the dark. He said, ‘the sky was clear; the stars were brilliant like a blizzard of fireflies in the night. There was a calm inner peace. Halfway around the world in a war zone, there was a calm inner peace: God’s therapy.’”

Today, after 94 years, the heavy hand of time has claimed the life of my gamps. But in death, as in life, my grandfather has won – for he has exchanged his earthly burdens for a heavenly home and is at peace.

Yes, George Herbert Walker Bush was the most gracious, most decent, and most humble man I will ever know. And it's the honor of a lifetime to share his name.

God bless you, Gampy. Until we meet again – maybe out on that rock boat we built together.